

American Bar Association

Philadelphia, a Historic and Modern City

Author(s): Joseph Jackson

Source: *American Bar Association Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (JUNE 1940), pp. 468-469, 481

Published by: American Bar Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25712803>

Accessed: 22-10-2015 06:43 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Bar Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Bar Association Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Philadelphia, a Historic and Modern City

BY JOSEPH JACKSON

Editor, Pennsylvania Architect and Engineer; author of Literary Landmarks of Philadelphia, American Colonial Architect, etc.

"THERE is no Place de Louis Quinze or Carrousel," complained Mrs. Trollope, when writing of Philadelphia in her irritating book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, "no Regent Street or Green Park, to make one exclaim 'How beautiful!' all is even, straight, uniform, and uninteresting." But this English woman, a keen observer and a brutally frank critic, was writing of the city as it was in 1830, and her observations concerned only those two square miles then included within its political boundaries. On the other hand, she was charmed with the Fairmount Water Works and the beautiful surrounding garden and admitted their attraction.

The rigidity of the city plan and the rather uniform architecture of the red brick houses which then lined the streets reacted unfavorably upon all the note-taking English travelers who sought only the center of the old city. But Captain Thomas Hamilton, who wrote a book on the Americans in 1833, while not always friendly, did find something to praise in Philadelphia, which he had first characterized as "mediocrity personified." He admitted it to be "a comfortable city, that is [he qualified] the houses average better than in any other with which I am acquainted," and added, "The public buildings are certainly superior to any I have seen in America."

Charles Dickens Thought the City Too Regular

Dickens found the city "handsome, but distractingly regular." He complained that "After walking about it for an hour or two I felt that I would have given the world for a crooked street."

More had been done, however, in the development of architecture in Philadelphia up to the year 1830 than in any other American city. The last hundred years have accomplished wonders for the physical appearance of the city which long was regarded as the capital of the Colonies, and was, in fact, for ten years, in the youth of the Republic, the designated National Capital.

Philadelphians take a just though modest pride in the history of their city, but are more keenly appreciative of the Philadelphia they have seen expand and develop within their own time. This is not now the city of Mrs. Trollope, of Dickens, or even of Thackeray, who described it lovingly as "grave, calm, kind old Philadelphia." It is a very modern place; yet there is pride in the knowledge that despite the replacement of much of the old by modern architecture, the city still contains more literary and historic landmarks than any other in this country.

Landmarks of the City and of the Nation

Some of these landmarks are among the most prized possessions not only of the city but of the nation. They are connected with the birth of the United States and always will be associated with those men of whom Lord Chatham said: "that for solidity of reason, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion under a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress in Philadelphia."

Carpenters Hall, where the first Continental Congress assembled, Independence Hall, where it adopted

the Declaration of Independence and where the Constitution was framed by a convention comprising the most distinguished and able body of men ever gathered in this or any other country, are outstanding monuments of the nation's origin, which Philadelphia exhibits with excusable pride.

Traveling about the city, one may quickly pass in review three centuries represented by buildings, either historically important or interesting from their antiquity. Old Swedes Church, dating from the seventeenth century, may claim attention on both grounds; it is the oldest church building in the city and the chief reminder of the fact that the Swedes were the original settlers. In a tomb in front of the church lie the remains of the first American ornithologist, Alexander Wilson, an example of paradox not unknown in the history of this country, of being a native of another, and American only in his special genius.

Old Civic Buildings

Some of the earliest examples of our indebtedness to classical architecture are found in Philadelphia. Here are preserved the buildings of the first and second Banks of the United States. The extraordinary group of buildings comprising the Independence Hall block forms the largest example of Colonial architecture to be found anywhere. The group is of interest particularly to the bar of the country since it owes its existence to perhaps the most eminent lawyer in the Colonies, Andrew Hamilton. While he did not actually design the old City Hall (now Independence Hall) as was long erroneously believed, he planned this civic center and supervised its construction. He provided also for the buildings erected long after his death which act as supporters for the central structure; the old City Hall to the east and Congress Hall to the west. The latter was designed for the use of the District Court of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but was used by Congress as the Capitol while Philadelphia was the seat of the Federal Government.

Where the Early Courts Sat

All these structures have more than a passing interest for the lawyer because in them the Supreme Court of the United States sat during the ten years that the Federal Government was here. In all three buildings at one time or another, the Federal District Court and the Circuit Court of Appeals sat. The interest of the legal profession centers also in the hall of the Philosophical Society, the oldest scientific body in this country, since it housed the Federal Courts for several years toward the middle of the nineteenth century. The Philosophical Society's headquarters are around the corner from Independence Hall abutting on Independence Square. Benjamin Franklin, the founder of the society and its president until his death, was instrumental in the erection of this building. Its library and museum contain much valuable and historical material, including the Penn Papers, the Franklin Papers, and one of the original drafts of the Declaration of Independence in Jefferson's handwriting.

Beautiful Residences of a Century and a Half Ago

Some of the fine old residences of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are still to be seen in Philadelphia. The home of Judge Joseph Hopkinson, where he wrote the anthem, "Hail Columbia," remains in good condition, though slightly altered. The old building of the Franklin Institute where Judge John Bouvier had his office and where he compiled his still famous Law Dictionary, has been entirely renovated and is now the Atwater Kent Museum, containing a collection of objects illustrative of the city's history. One of the homes of Judge Bouvier also remains, and in splendid condition still stands the mansion of David Paul Brown, a famous orator of his day.

Christ Church, a brilliant example of early American ecclesiastical architecture showing a definite Christopher Wren influence, is admirably preserved. It is a truly historic structure and its place in American history is indicated by the tombs and hatchments both within its walls and in the surrounding yard. All the Colonial Governors of Pennsylvania worshipped there, as did Franklin and Washington. James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration and head of the first law school established in this country—that of the University of Pennsylvania—lies in one of its vaults. This, like other ancient churches in central Philadelphia, is now regarded

as historic in character and maintained in repair for sentimental reasons rather than as a place of worship.

Philadelphia Now a Modern City

Shifting in the center of population and the building of the suburbs of the city in adjoining counties has been marked during the last thirty or forty years. So also, the financial district which had its center in the eastern end of the city for more than a century, has moved westward and the present City Hall may be said now to mark its center. Much that was picturesque (and also uncomfortable) has thus been removed; departed like the Quaker aspect of the old city; today Philadelphia is only historically the Quaker City. It is very modern, decidedly progressive, and in the language of the times, streamlined. Yet, fortunately, enough of its historic past survives with the old hospitable spirit, together with some of that calmness and kindness which impressed the author of "Vanity Fair."

Recently, the Federal Government has built several enormous structures in Philadelphia in keeping with the trend toward modernization and efficiency. The first of these was the new Custom House, a magnificent structure, adding another tower to the city's sky-line. A little later, a new General Post Office was erected, perhaps the most efficient building for this purpose

(Continued on page 481)



Old City Hall, Philadelphia

Where the United States Supreme Court Sat and Where the District and Circuit Courts also were held in the early years.

was, the sun occasionally burst through, and gave courage to those on whom the burden rested heaviest.

He continued by saying that, difficult as it was to go about this work with equanimity, the members of the American Law Institute, even though the importance of their work might seem to be dwarfed in the light of present world events, must realize that they had a real task to perform now more than ever before, and that nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of its continued performance.

A hushed silence, followed by prolonged applause, reflected the feelings of all who heard his words.

Philadelphia, a Historic and Modern City
(Continued from page 469)

ever designed, including facilities for regularly receiving and sending out mail by aeroplanes which land on and take off from the roof of the building. Latest in this series and simple and massive in line is the new United States Court House, impressive in its very simplicity. This is now occupied by the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and by the local United States District Court. The new building of the Municipal Court of Philadelphia stands beside the Free Library on the Parkway and the two structures resemble each other in size and design.

Architectural Beauty

These and other notable examples of architecture in Philadelphia may be somewhat incredible to those who have heard only of its "red brick fronts, with marble trimmings," which, incidentally, are by now a rarity. A century ago, visitors referred to the city as "the Athens of America," a title which reflected the refined taste and the love of the classic shown in the character of its public buildings. Among such structures is the old Merchants Exchange which has now fallen upon evil times and which has been robbed of its glory by additions and subtractions, though still a majestic relic. Other outstanding examples are the Ridgway Library and the Old Custom House, both having pure Doric facades. The main building of Girard College has been declared the finest example of Corinthian architecture to be found anywhere outside Greece itself. What is believed to be the first Palladian window in any building in this country is found in the eastern end of Christ Church, constructed more than two centuries ago.

Art, Literature, and Science

Quite outside its industrial enterprises, Philadelphia is famed as a pioneer in the establishment of scientific and art organizations, whose efforts have made it known throughout the cultural world. Its museums are noted for their complete and, in some instances, unique collections. The first Arctic expedition ever organized in America set out from Philadelphia. Its libraries, public and private, have earned a deserved reputation for the city in the fields of literature and historical research, and many landmarks connected with those eminent in the arts and sciences and in literature may still be seen.

It has been said of Philadelphia that it is at the same time the most English and most American city in the country. This paradox is readily explained, however, when we consider that it was founded by sturdy Britishers who formed the Colonies on this side of the Atlantic and brought with them their native love of law, order and freedom which lie at the foundation of American life.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ANNUAL MEETING, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, SEPTEMBER 9-13, 1940

Headquarters—Bellevue-Stratford Hotel

Hotel accomodations, all with bath, are available as follows:

	Single for 1 person	Double (Dbl. bed) 2 persons	Twin beds for 2 persons	Parlor suites (2 rooms for 1 or 2 pers.)
Adelphia (13th & Chestnut)	\$3.50-5.00	\$5.00-6.00	\$6.00- 8.00	\$12.00-25.00
Barclay (18th & Ritten- house Sq. E.)....		6.00	7.00-10.00	12.00-18.00
Bellevue-Stratford (Broad & Walnut)	All space exhausted.			
Benjamin Franklin (9th & Chestnut)	3.50-5.00	5.00-6.00	6.00- 8.00	12.00-14.00
Drake (1512 Spruce St.)	3.50	5.50	6.00	10.00
Essex (13th & Filbert)	3.00-3.50	5.00-6.00	7.00	
McAlpin (19th & Chestnut)	2.25-2.75	4.00	4.50- 5.00	
Majestic (Broad & Girard)	2.50-3.00	4.00-5.00	5.00	8.00-12.00
Manufacturers & Bankers Club (Broad & Walnut)	(Men only)			
Philadelphian (39th & Chestnut)	3.00-4.00	5.00-5.50	6.00- 8.00	9.00-20.00
Ritz-Carlton (Broad & Walnut)				12.00
St. James (13th & Walnut)	3.00		5.00- 6.00	10.00
Stephen Girard .. (2027 Chestnut St.)	2.75-3.25	4.50-5.50	5.50	
Sylvania (13th & Locust)	3.00-3.50		5.00- 6.00	10.00-12.00
Walton (Broad & Locust)	2.50-4.00	4.00-5.00	5.00- 6.00	8.00-12.00
Warburton (20th & Sansom)	3.00		5.00	
Warwick (17th & Locust)	4.50-5.50		7.00- 8.00	12.00-14.50
Wellington (19th & Walnut)	4.00		6.00	8.00

EXPLANATION OF TYPE OF ROOMS

A single room contains either a single or double bed to be occupied by *one person*. A double room contains a double bed to be occupied by *two persons*.

A twin-bed room contains two beds to be occupied by two persons. A twin-bed room will not be assigned for occupancy by one person.

A parlor suite consists of parlor and communicating bedroom containing double or twin beds. Additional bedrooms may be had in connection with the parlor.

To avoid unnecessary correspondence, members are requested to be specific in making requests for reservation, stating hotel, *first and second choice* of, number of rooms required and rate therefor, names of persons who will occupy the same, arrival date and, if possible, definite information as to whether such arrival will be in the morning or evening.

Requests for reservations should be addressed to the Reservation Department, 1140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.